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ABSTRACT

This report is a general overview of year-round education. It is intended to provide the reader with an objective introduction to the variety of scheduling alternatives currently in practice. Both the positive and negative aspects of year-round education, as viewed by the individuals directly involved (students, teachers, parents, and school administrators), are summarized. The preparation, implementation, and operational stages of year-round education programs are emphasized, and the reported effects of year-round education on students are discussed. Ten year-round schedules are described. (Author/DS)

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YEAR ROUND EDUCATION

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YEAR ROUND EDUCATION

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INTRODUCTION

A hallmark of American education for the last four decades is a three-month summer vacation. The September to June school calendar has enjoyed a virtually undisputed existence for these years. In recent years, however, many schools have challenged this tradition by operating on a year-round basis. This system is termed year-round education, often abbreviated YRE. Proponents of YRE claim increased educational opportunities and better utilization of facilities; opponents claim increased yearly costs and unnecessary disruptions of the status quo.

This report is a general overview of year-round education; it is intended to provide the reader with an objective introduction to YRE. It begins with a brief history of school calendars, then delves into various YRE plans. Reasons for adopting a YRE program are examined and the variables leading to success or failure of YRE are analyzed. Finally, reported effects of YRE on students are discussed.

THE AMERICAN SCHOOL CALENDAR: A SHORT HISTORY

Throughout American history, the school calendar has responded to the changing needs of the nation. The nine-month school calendar is not, as some believe, embedded deep in the American educational system.

In the early years of American education, school calendars were designed to fit the needs of the communities. In rural areas all available human resources were needed for the agricultural industry during the spring, summer, and fall months. Therefore, the agrarian school systems had a school calendar usually lasting six months, from the last harvest to the first planting. During these same years, however, urban areas often had eleven- or twelve-month calendars.

In 1847, the idea of organizing students into levels (grades) emerged, giving rise to attempts to organize curricula into grade units. This, in turn, pressured rural schools to lengthen their school calendars in order to cover the graded units. This increased merging of rural and urban communities, resulted in a "standard" length for the school year. By 1915, the nine-month school calendar, which had been designed around the agrarian economy of the nation, had become the norm for most of the United States.

The September-to-June, 180-day school calendar (henceforth referred to as the conventional school calendar) did not actually become commonly accepted until World War II. During World War II, psychologists showed that factory workers could increase their production if they were given a vacation from their tedious tasks. As a result, Roosevelt and Churchill declared that defense plant workers should be given paid vacations. With the scarcity of labor, it was necessary to schedule these vacations at a time when acceptable short-term workers (teachers) would assume the jobs. Thus, the September-to-June school calendar and the summer vacation tradition took a firmer hold.

With the end of World War II, and the "baby boom," several districts considered adopting a YRE in order to avoid constructing new schools. While implemented for short terms in some districts, such plans were generally rejected, for the traditional school calendar was firmly a part of American tradition. Churches and clubs had developed programs to run from June to September. More important, Americans were accustomed to taking family vacations in the summer months.

Following the successful Russian Launch of Sputnik in 1957, American schools were thrown into the public spotlight. During the sixties, state and federal funds were allocated for school expansions and improvements. Curricular and organizational innovations became popular. However, in the early 1970's inflation and decreased federal funding left many school districts with in-

creasing student enrollments and inadequate financial resources. [1]

With the alternatives to overcrowded schools and decreased funds being few and often undesirable, American schools gradually began to accept year-round education. From 1966 to 1970, a number of departments of education conducted feasibility studies of year-round education. By 1971, 600 school districts nationwide were seriously studying year-round education proposals. California, for example, currently has 56 year-round systems operating, involving 200 schools; and approximately 57 additional districts are now giving YRE consideration. [2]

In the past, American school calendars have attempted to change with the changing needs of American society. Current social and economic needs have again raised interest in adjustments to school year calendars. If these forces continue, there may be a continued growth of interest in year-round schools.

DIFFERENT PLANS OF YRE

The terms "year-round education" is misleading. Many envision children at their desks for 52 weeks with no break. Year-round plans require no such ordeal. Students attend school for the same number of days as they would under a conventional calendar, but these days are spread throughout twelve months.

There are many methods for implementing year-round education. N. S. Rifkin writes that "year-round schools is a concept with a potential of more than 16,000 different implementation plans (one for every district in the nation)."[3] There is a variety of names associated with the concept: year-round education, extended school year, and continuous learning year. Basically, year-round education and continuous learning year are the same. They both refer to the rescheduling of the school year. They do not necessarily require students to spend more time in school. Extended school year, on the other hand, describes a longer school year.

Presently there are approximately twelve YRE plans being implemented in school systems throughout the United States. Following are brief descriptions of some of the more common calendars:

Quarter Plan

This plan divides the year into four 12-week sessions. In the voluntary Quarter Plan the student selects any three of the four sessions to equal one complete school year. If the program is mandated, the students are assigned to three of the four sessions, balancing the enrollment among the four sessions. Under this plan, the curriculum is organized into twelve-week units. Schools operating under this plan can accommodate up to 33% more students.

Quinmester Plan

The Quinmester offers five nine-week semesters, or terms. Students attend any four of the five if the plan is voluntary or are assigned four of the five if mandated. Under this plan, which has been particularly popular at the high school level, the curriculum must be organized into nine-week packages. This is essential because any combination of Quins is possible for each student. An increase of 25% in students per school can be achieved under this plan.

45-15 Plan

Currently, the most prominent year-round program in California at the elementary level is the 45-15 Plan. Under this plan, the calendar is divided into four nine-week quarters, each separated by a three-week vacation. There are three

variations of this plan: the Block Plan, the Staggered Plan, and the Flexible Plan. Under the 45-15 Block Plan, the entire student body and teaching staff share the same schedule. The Staggered 45-15 Plan divides the students into four separate groups, staggering their vacation periods, with only one group on vacation at any one time. Thus, the school is in continuous operation with only 75% of student and teacher population in attendance at any one time; single school enrollment, then, may be increased by 33%. The Flexible 45-15 Plan assigns students to tracks or groups but, because the curriculum is individualized, students have the opportunity to make minor alterations in their attendance patterns.

60-20 Plan

Similar to the 45-15 Plan is the 60-20 Plan. Instead of the school year being divided into four nine-week quarters as it is under the 45-15 Plan, the school year is divided into three sixty-day sessions. Students attend for sixty days and then vacation for twenty days. The three variations of the 45-15 Plan -- Block Plan, Staggered Plan, and Flexible Plan -- can also be applied to the 60-20 Plan. This plan, Like the 45-15 Plan, allows schools to accommodate 33% more students.

Concept Six Plan

The Concept Six Plan is relatively new. It divides the school year into six sessions of approximately 43 days each. The student body is divided into three groups, only two of which are in the school at any one time. Students attend four of the six sessions and vacation the other two. In states where 175-180 days are required, the additional days can be made up by overlapping the groups on half-day sessions the first and last day of each term, or through independent study and intersession programs, and/or through creative off-campus activities. Through the Concept-Six Plan the school facility can accommodate 50% more students.

Concept Eight Plan

Under the Concept Eight Plan, particularly popular at the high school level, the year is divided into eight six-week blocks of time. If it is a voluntary plan, students choose any six of the eight terms. If it is a mandatory program, students are assigned to six terms to balance the enrollment. This plan requires that the curriculum be placed in six-week units. Single facility accommodation of students may be increased by 33%.

Concept 16 Plan and Concept 12 Plan

Concept 16 and Concept 12 are basically the same. Concept 16 consists of 16 three-week curriculum modules where students select or are assigned to twelve of the sixteen for their basic 36 weeks. They may attend additional three-week modules if they wish. Concept 12 consists of 12 four-week modules, with students selecting nine of the twelve.

With the curriculum in three-week modules, for example, students potentially have the option of entering or leaving school at any three-week interval. For vacations, they have the potential of short three-week breaks or six, nine or twelve weeks off. Concept 16 has the potential to save 33% of the school space if students are assigned to four tracks, while Concept 12 can save 50% space on the basis of three assigned tracks.

Flexible All-Year School Plan

The Flexible All-Year School Plan operates continuously with no beginning and no ending of the school year. The school operates in such a way that any child or teacher can take his vacation any time of the year, for any length of time needed, then return to school without loss of continuity. This plan is based on the premise that education can be totally individualized, both in time and in instruction.

Personalized Continuous-Year Plan

Under the Personalized Continuous-Year Plan, the school is open approximately 240 days. Unlike the other proposals described, this plan has no blocks of instructional time. The entire curriculum is individualized, and students may attend all of the 240 school days or may come and go throughout the year as long as they are making an effort to reach the required minimum number of days.

Intersession

Intersession is not a YRE plan, but rather a supplementary program which may be incorporated into any plan. Intersession is comparable to summer school on the conventional calendar. As for summer school, many states provide ADA funds for intersession. Intersession is designed to provide educational opportunities for those students on vacation. For districts in which all on-campus facilities must be utilized for normal session instruction, however, intersessions are feasible only if the majority of them are conducted at off-campus sites. Well-planned, interesting intersessions have become a key component of successful year-round programs.

REASONS FOR ADOPTING YEAR-ROUND EDUCATION

Educational Opportunities

A growing number of school districts now adopt YRE with the express intention of providing a better education. These schools structure their curricula around the new schedule. Teachers are frequently involved in designing and producing their own materials. Students plan their own programs several times per year. Some high school students may utilize the YRE program to graduate earlier or engage in work experiences.

Many educational advantages for students are listed by such districts. Most frequently mentioned are: prevention of "loss of learning" during the summer; more individualized instruction; more frequent evaluation of progress; shorter, more varied units of study; additional enrichment programs during intersessions; opportunities for communication, cooperation, and involvement of community, parents, and school; and opportunities for integration through open enrollment.

Special Programs

School programs such as migrant education, Title 1, educationally disadvantaged youth, learning disabilities guidance, mentally retarded youth, autistic youth, educationally handicapped youth and bilingual education have the potential of particularly benefiting from YRE programs. The benefits of these special programs are due to four characteristics unique to YRE: shortened vacation periods, complete school programs during the summer months, the potential for complete school programs for more than 180 days per student, and shortened curricular units.

The first of these, shortened vacation periods, particularly benefits educationally disadvantaged youth, students on federal lunch programs, and non-English speaking youths. The interruption in academic growth of disadvantaged youth over three-month vacation periods and the similar lack of opportunities for non-English students to practice English can be minimized with shortened vacations.[4] Students on federal lunch programs need not go for three months without this component of their daily diets. Indeed, they need not miss any of these lunches if they attend YRE intersessions.

The second characteristic -- complete school programs during the summer months -- allows children of migrant families to attend school whenever they are in the school district. Under the conventional school calendar migrant children miss numerous school days due to the relocation of their families; they are in school an average of 50 to 75 days per year. In districts that have YRE, migrant children are attending school an average of 135 days per school year.[5]

The third characteristic -- the potential for complete school programs for more than 180 days per student -- can be advantageous, as has been noted above, to disadvantaged youth and children on federal lunch programs. In addition, mentally retarded, autistic, and handicapped children, under YRE, can receive the instruction and care of a trained specialist all year instead of for only nine months.

Shortened curricular units -- the last characteristic -- can be especially beneficial for bilingual, learning disabilities guidance, educationally handicapped, or any students involved in special aid programs. The shortened curricular units make it easier for these students to be cycled into regular classes when they are ready rather than having to wait until September as commonly happens under the conventional calendar.

Customizing Education

YRE, more than the conventional school calendar, allows students and families to customize their schedules. Under the conventional school year family vacations are restricted to the summer months. Certain professions, however, have their high peaks during June, July and August. Carpenters, movers, loggers and resort owners and workers, for example, may be unable to take their vacations when their children are out of school. They must either vacation without their children or have their children miss school. Likewise, YRE provides the opportunity for families to take vacations in different seasons of the year. Not only are these vacation periods more flexible for the family, vacation areas are also often less congested.

Another consideration is the possibility of varied familial relationships. YRE provides the unique opportunity, if desired, for parents to schedule different vacation schedules for each child. This affords them the opportunity to interact with each child on a concentrated one-to-one basis.

Overcrowding

The overcrowding of schools is a primary reason for adopting a year-round school calendar in many districts. In some districts school enrollments are rising, building costs are increasing, and budgets are decreasing. Many of these school districts cannot afford new buildings or additions to old buildings in which to house their overflow of students. Other available options such as busing, extending the school day, and doubling sessions are considered less desirable. Depending on the plan implemented, YRE can increase single facility accommodation of students by up to 50%.

Declining Enrollment

Many districts are faced with an opposite but equally financially taxing problem -- that of declining enrollment. YRE can assist in alleviating this problem as well. Under YRE, districts with declining enrollments may sooner consolidate the resources of two schools into one facility. For example, a district with two schools

operating at 75% capacity would have to wait until the schools' enrollment dropped even further before it could consolidate the two schools into one facility. By implementing YRE, these same two schools could be consolidated into one facility, operating at 150% of its conventional calendar occupancy. Such consolidation has the potential of saving millions of dollars in maintenance, returning land to the tax rolls, and benefiting the school district with dollars received from the sale of unused property.

Budget

As has been suggested above, YRE may provide potential savings for school districts. In districts with increasing enrollment, YRE allows the accommodation of up to 50% more students without increased facility construction. In declining enrollment situations the consolidation of two schools can save money. In districts with "stable" enrollment YRE can provide for facilities not otherwise available to the students and faculty. Areas previously needed as classrooms can be opened for use as art rooms, libraries, shops, movement exploration rooms, or lunch rooms.

Outlook for the Future

Increasing the educational opportunities for many individuals, customizing school calendars for families, increasing the utilization of facilities, and assisting the efforts to control budgets are all viable and rewarding potential advantages of YRE. In addition, the current efforts to implement YRE can be viewed as a stepping stone to the years ahead.

Continuous life-long learning is becoming a component of contemporary society. A learning society is developing to accommodate the explosion of information, the retraining of people as technology creates the need for essential new skills and eliminates many previously available occupations, and the coping that is necessary to adjust to rapid change. Viewed from the future, YRE can assist people and society now by providing calendar and curricular options to meet the needs of changing life and learning styles.

PREPARATION

Planning is the crucial factor in the ultimate success of any innovation, and YRE is no exception. Once the need for some type of change within a school district has been identified, the initial steps involved in the planning stage should begin. Planning periods of between six and eighteen months have been found to be the most effective. Mandated and large programs generally require longer preparation periods whereas smaller voluntary programs may require only six months.

In the planning stage certain areas need to be recognized as requiring attention, the amount of attention varying with the reasons for adopting YRE, the plan adopted, and the existing state of affairs in the school, the district, and the community. The following areas should each be addressed in the preparation stage: research on YRE; public information programs; inservice for district personnel; curriculum revision and/or development; school organization and management; special services programs; supply and materials; financial concerns, maintenance schedule adjustments; food service; and transportation.

Administrators in YRE emphasize the involvement of teachers and, to a lesser degree, classified personnel early in the planning stage. In addition, community support is vital to success. One way to achieve this support is through extensive media coverage.

IMPLEMENTATION

Mandatory vs. Voluntary

Depending on the reasons underlying adoption of year-round education, two options are available to a district: a comprehensive program which mandates attendance in YRE for all students or a plan which offers YRE as an alternative to the conventional schedule.

However valid the underlying reasons for mandating YRE, the risk of dissension proves to be great because it automatically places those people, school and community members alike, who prefer a nine month schedule in a "lose" position. Having a district split into winners and losers causes friction, and this is one reason why districts that mandate YRE oftentimes experience bitterness from community and teachers. Such bitterness not only adds to the problems inherent in the first year of a new program, but can totally undermine its success.

Not all districts which mandate YRE experience these difficulties (or at least not to a highly detrimental degree). Indeed, a mandate of YRE can provide certain advantages. Under a mandate, all efforts of a district may be concentrated rather than fragmented between two different schedules. Bus scheduling, for example, may be simplified through neighborhood track assignments, although many districts opt for busing based on curricular needs. Ordering supplies, signing contracts, planning budgets, registering students, assigning rooms and teachers, and all of the many administrative, business, and clerical duties are reduced if a traditional calendar option is unavailable. Likewise, teacher inservices and curriculum development may emphasize areas especially relevant to YRE. In general, a mandate of YRE and a consequent elmination of a conventional calendar in contrast to simultaneous operation of both year-round and traditional calendars can provide for better utilization of district resources.

Adoption of YRE as an optional alternative to the school district's conventional calendar lessens the win/lose attitude and can therefore eliminate some problems that result from a mandate. If the preparation stage includes good public relations, as well as community and teacher involvement, the transition to YRE can proceed without the dissension that often accompanies mandated programs. Because the opportunity for more individuals to "win" is available, the transition to and running of YRE on an alternative basis can be marked by increased positive parental and community involvement, innovations in curricula, and uplifted teacher, student, and administrative morale.

It should be noted that simply because there are both year-round and conventional calendars in one district, alternatives do not necessarily exist for the public or teachers. Teachers must be placed where they are needed just as there is not

always space for every student on the cycle or site the family may choose. One school district in California experienced great community dissent which resulted in a court hearing the year the district designated three elementary schools year-round, leaving only one elementary school on a conventional schedule. The dissent was based on a community desire for not only a choice of calendars, but a choice of calendars for neighborhood schools. For, with the implementation of YRE, the choice of schools became one of a neighborhood school on a district designated calendar or a school as far as nine miles away.[6] Such a problem can be eliminated in large school districts which have schools in close proximity to one another or by providing both year-round and conventional calendars on one campus.

A similar problem arose in a second California district. Some of the residents of this district claimed that the plan discriminated against them because their children "would no longer be able to work in the fields in the summer." The results included demonstration marches, spirited letters in the local newspaper and the establishment of a "boycott school." The YRE commission of this district credits the problem to poor and tardy media coverage and the mistake of not including more parents and community members in the planning stage.[7]

With optional rather than mandatory YRE, all operations of the district become more complicated. Bus scheduling cannot be efficiently condensed as it can when all schools are on year-round calendars. Clerical, administrative, and business duties are greater than if the conventional calendar were eliminated. Similarly, teacher inservices, curriculum development, and special services must be designed to fit the needs of both year-round and traditional calendars. In short, the offering of YRE as an alternative may create a division of district interests and efforts.

OPERATION

Administrators

A number of administrators of YRE programs maintain that with YRE, learning opportunities are greater and facilities are used more efficiently. With the distributed vacation schedules, student boredom may be reduced both in school and on vacation. Many districts report a decrease in vandalism. One principal used the staggered vacation plan to break up student gangs by placing members on different tracks.

Many administrators mentioned the process of change itself as a positive factor. Changing from a conventional to a year-round schedule means that almost every aspect of school must be reconsidered and justified. Though not unique to YRE, multi-gradedness, continuous progress learning, individualization, and criterion based testing, among others, are well suited to and highly visible in YRE schools. Additionally, goals are set for shorter time spans with more frequent evaluations.

However, a considerable number of problems in the staggered year-round schedules must be confronted by administrators. Communication problems are particularly acute for the principal. He/she must keep the vacationing students, parents, and faculty abreast of the latest policies and upcoming events. Likewise, new teachers, families, and personnel must be oriented to YRE.

The decision making processes which include faculty and/or parents become more complicated. Sometimes decisions need to be made when portions of faculty or parent groups are on vacation. This places the administrator in the position of deciding whether to make such decisions with only partial involvement or to postpone such decisions until all members have had the opportunity to provide input.

Related to this decision making process is the issue of committee membership. Committees must decide how to or whether to receive information from members on vacation. Some schools have two representatives, each on a different schedule, on each committee. Other schools require committee members to attend meetings during vacations. On the other hand, some school districts accept the fact that there will always be some people absent from meetings.

Inservice activities also present scheduling problems. Some districts repeat inservice for vacationing teachers while others require that teachers on vacation return for inservice programs. When this latter method is used, inservice is scheduled for the first day of the off-track teacher's vacation.

With staggered tracking comes the problem of assigning students to tracks. This is no easy administrative task. Ideally, all grade levels should be offered on each track, all required courses should be offered at some point in the year on each track, the class sizes should be relatively equal on each track, and all tracks should be somewhat balanced numerically (if maximum utilization of space is a goal). In light of these demands, it is mechanically easiest to assign tracks by neighborhood. Under this scheme, it is necessary to cover only a percentage of the bus routes at any given time. Therefore, families and neighborhood friendships are not split among different tracks. However, such an assignment method does not allow for placement of students according to individual needs or parental choice of vacation periods.

In order to provide parental choice of tracks, some districts do not assign students. They allow parents to choose tracks best suited to their schedules. Administrative efficiency generally must be maximized, however, and the equalizing factors of class size, grades, and course offerings must still be met. Thus, parental choice is usually limited to a first-come, first-served basis.

Periodic enrollment adjustments must be made, which affect the track assignments of students and teachers. New and transfer students may cause unequal class enrollments and therefore unequal classloads. Furthermore, Average Daily Attendance (ADA) may decrease if children join parents for off-cycle vacations and do not make up the time in intersessions.

Other scheduling problems concern maintenance and repair work. Whenever possible, disruptive work should take place in the evening, over the weekends, or during one of the school-wide vacations, such as winter or spring break. When this is impossible, disruptive work needs to be scheduled with a conscious effort to minimize disruptions. Such schedules are frequently very different from schedules under a conventional program.

School events such as assemblies and picnics must be scheduled so that no one track misses more than the others. Public health programs and school pictures must be repeated for the vacationing group. Students participating in sports, drama, or debate teams must either participate during vacation or be on a track that coordinates with their activities.

In addition to scheduling problems within their building, principals find that publishers, state and county offices, and even their own districts need to cooperate in YRE. A common occurrence is the arrival of books and supplies weeks after school has started. Special arrangements must also be made for state tests. Because of the staggered vacations, some tests must be administered early and others late.

Teachers

A key factor in the success or failure of a year-round program is the support of the teachers. In reviewing district surveys of teacher opinions, one finds

varied and conflicting reports. After six months on a YRE schedule, 80% of the Pajaro Valley teachers favored YRE.[8] A survey in Lakeside Union, after one and one-half years on a YRE plan, found that 52% of the teachers preferred a traditional schedule.[9] Of San Diego Unified teachers with two years of year-round experience, 78% favored YRE, and 18% favored traditional calendars; 4% expressed no opinion.[10]

Mandated year-round programs leaving no options open to teachers are more likely to generate ill feelings than voluntary programs. A staggered schedule, with its communication and scheduling problems, is more difficult to operationalize than a schedule shared by the entire school.

A voluntary staggered schedule, however, has a greater potential for working. In a written report to its Board of Education, one Pajaro faculty group concluded:

> Though year-round school has not been perfect, the problems associated with it are not insurmountable. Primarily they are administrative and are due to a lack of experience in planning year-round schools. In any event, we consider year-round school much superior to double sessions, our only other alternative.

When teachers have been involved in the planning stages, as in Pajaro, they are more likely to accept and become a part of the change process rather than work against it.

One advantage of YRE cited by a number of educators is the expanded learning opportunities for students. In the quarter plans, which are usually at the intermediate and secondary levels, the students have a greater variety of classes and teachers from which to choose. In some districts, students can select when they attend as well as the number of days, restricted only by state regulations.

Year-round education can also provide an expansion of contract options for teachers, but, as has been previously mentioned, teachers must be assigned where they are needed. Some teachers may be assigned to cycles or sites they find undesirable. A problem that frequently occurs in the first year is that few teachers desire the track that starts in the summer months, since this means they will not have an extended vacation following the just completed conventional year.

There are many advantages to the shortened instructional periods. Without the long summer disruption, some teachers believe there is less forgetting, higher student achievement, and more continuity in instruction. These breaks also enable the teachers and students to relax more often, reducing fatigue.

Vacation schedules can at the same time be restricting to teachers. Many teachers feel they are limited to night and weekend graduate classes because most graduate degrees are offered over the summer. There has been some attempt at remedying the problem. The University of Northern Colorado is

offering a master's degree specifically for the year-round teacher.[12]

The staggered vacation schedule also presents other problems identified by teachers that the faculty and administrators must collectively work out. Some teachers claim they are not able to "get away" from school. Since school continues when they are on vacation, there are inservices, meetings, and school functions which the teachers will miss or have to make up. In some cases, teachers are required to attend these functions. In addition, many teachers use their vacations for preparing lessons and materials. Teachers also complain that the short vacations give them insufficient time to relax.

If school boards are willing to increase personalization of teaching styles and needs, the variety of contract options increases dramatically. For example, it is possible to offer more than twenty contract variations. Some teachers will choose to be employed for the same period of time as the group they teach. In this situation every child in the class and the teacher are on the same track, attending school and taking breaks together. Other teachers might extend their contracts for a multi-track assignment, where the teacher has groups of students from all the tracks. Students leave and return according to their individual or group schedules.

Teachers might extend their contracts in a variety of ways. As mentioned above, they might teach extra days. They might, instead, cover for a vacationing principal or help with the administrative workload. Other options are to substitute for sick teachers or teach intersession. With extended contracts, then, the choices are varied and great. The teachers are no longer forced to pursue summer employment to supplement their incomes. The option is available for teaching to become a "full-time" profession.

A special problem arises in scheduling the contracts of specialists (elementary music, art, and physical education specialists, psychologists, speech therapists, counselors). The ten-month contract of these specialists must be designed so that no track is denied service. With special program teachers and their students' vacations at different times, continuity of program is a potential problem that needs to be considered. From the classroom teacher's viewpoint, the scheduling of thirty students into three or more special programs, each on different schedules, can prove very disrupting to the classroom. One successful solution has been the extension of special teacher contracts to twelve months.

In many schools, staggered schedules require the teachers to change classrooms after each vacation. This presents the problem of moving teacher and student materials, storing these materials, and then relocating them again when the new session begins. Schools built for a year-round schedule have storage space within the classrooms, but older schools often have their storage areas in another section of the campus. Wherever the storage area, however, the moving-in process is both time and energy consuming. Some districts have made provisions for this process, such as paying teachers extra for non-teaching moving days, and scheduling a minimum day the last day of every cycle.

Teachers who are interested in teaming, unless they are on the same track, or the school is on a personalized continuous-year plan, find record keeping ponderous because the class makeup is always changing.

In trying to determine what the future might have in store for YRE, a survey conducted by the National Education Association in 1974 asked teachers throughout the nation questions about extending the school year. The responses present a somewhat different picture than the opinions expressed by the teachers already involved in YRE. More than half (51.9%) of the teachers polled were strongly or moderately opposed to YRE.[13]
The Florida Education Association offered seven areas of consideration for those districts looking toward a year-round program. These seven areas are representative of the concerns about YRE voiced by a majority of the teachers across the nation:[14]

1) Are teachers involved in the planning?

2) Will adequate inservice training be provided before the changeover to assure a smooth transition?

3) Will teachers be able to determine how many days a year they will work or will undesirable contracts be forced on them?

4) Will teachers be given adequate vacation breaks to allow them to earn higher degrees?

5) How many planning days will teachers have under the year-round operations compared to the traditional ones?

6) Is the community well-informed about the plan under consideration, receiving all sides of the issue?

7) Will parents and students have a chance to decide what times of the year the students will be out of school?

Non-Certificated Personnel

Non-certificated personnel on the conventional calendar have at least two months of summer to finish up one year's school business and prepare for the next year's business. A YRE calendar eliminates this period. Supplies must be ordered and arrive by the first day of classes. Rooms must be cleaned, painted, or repaired quickly. Registration and other clerical preparations for opening day must likewise be done quickly. In short, with YRE a whole new organizational method must be adopted. Districts experienced with YRE recommend that personnel be added to help ease the difficulties of this period.

Community and Parents

As indicated in an earlier section, the involvement of parents and community

members is vital to the successful planning and eventual implementation of YRE. Once implemented, YRE depends upon the support of parents and community for continued success.

Parental opposition to YRE includes statements such as "difficulty in scheduling babysitters for the staggered vacations"; "long summers are needed for complete relaxation, long term projects and extended trips"; "some children find year-round school too disruptive. . .some tracks have too many interruptions when the frequent short vacations are added to the regular legal holidays"; "it is difficult for families (with children on different tracks) to take vacations together."[15]

Not only parents, but community agencies also are affected by the implementation of YRE. Among them are the YMCA, YWCA, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, and summer camps. These organizations must adapt their programs to the YRE calendar. Many organizations complain of decreased participation because of shorter vacation periods. Camps established specifically for YRE students were cancelled in one city due to insufficient participation.

In an effort to alleviate such problems, many YRE schools help various agencies and families plan for the change in school calendar and life-style. Some school districts even provide salaried personnel to coordinate YRE and community services. Working mothers are shown that a sitter schedule may be no more difficult to devise under YRE than under the traditional schedule. Summer recreation planners are urged to provide stimulating and rewarding activities for children when they are out of school, no matter what time of year. YRE schools maintain that they help stop "the feast-or-famine" situation faced by many recreation facilities that are glutted during the summer and vacant the rest of the year. Summer camps can become all-season camps run by teachers with contract options and students with attendance options.

Inherent in many problems which have been cited is a lack of communication between school and community. Those schools which are successful have developed extensive lines of communication prior to adoption of YRE, through its implementation period and continuing as an ongoing process. Parent opinion surveys are sent out periodically to assess parents' immediate concerns regarding YRE. Results of the surveys are used to indicate areas in need of clarification, improvement, or reinforcement. An additional advantage of such feedback is that it provides orientation information to the families new to the community.

Many schools operate a volunteer aid program in which both parents and community members may become involved with various aspects of YRE. Through these volunteers, information regarding the YRE program is more easily disseminated to the community. The community, as well, has a line of communication to the school through the volunteer aids. Parents, community members, and school personnel are continuously in touch with and ready to respond to misconceptions regarding the school program.

Curriculum

Year-round education, with its shortened blocks of instructional time, provides

the opportunity for a revision of the school curricula into condensed units. It can, as the Commission of Public Schools Personnel Policies in Ohio points out, "force change and innovation in curriculum."[16] Indeed, San Francisco State University consultants conclude that if YRE is to be educationally sound, "it will not merely press the traditional curriculum into a new design, it will require fundamental changes in the scope and sequence of the program of studies."[17]

Different school districts meet the challenge of small instructional time units in different ways. Some have each teacher operating a self-contained class; the teacher goes to school and on vacation with her/his class. Under this system, each teacher designs the curricula for her/his class in small blocks to fit the track schedule. In small districts, at the high school and junior high level, this system is impractical. Moreover, in a school which has single person departments, certain courses may not be offered for every track. In this situation the school must carefully work through the scheduling process to provide as many curricular options as possible.

Another system which many districts utilize has classrooms composed of students on all tracks. Under this system, there are students entering and leaving a classroom every time there is a track change. The curriculum under such a system requires complex organization and careful planning, individualized instruction, and closer scrutiny of individual student progress.

In addition to the curricula-related issues already presented, districts have reported a number of problems and advantages with year-round education that can have an effect on the curriculum. Advantages include more special programs, less student boredom, fewer retentions since students can't fall too far behind, students take part in more class discussions, and students join in more class activities. Among the disadvantages is that transferring students are set back when moving into a traditional schedule.[18]

One curricula-related problem of YRE is the difficulty in scheduling specialists (elementary music, art, and physical education specialists, psychologists, speech therapists, counselors). If the specialist is on a ten-month contract, a twofold problem arises: one for the classroom teacher and one for the specialist. The ten-month contract of the specialist must be designed so that no track is denied service.

Co-curricular Programs

Opponents of YRE cite many potential disadvantages related to developing a strong co-curricular program. They point out that often vacationing students must volunteer to return to school to participate in course-related activities such as music and sports. Many year-round schools, however, have worked around this and developed successful athletic teams, and music programs rated high in inter-school competition. Students returning to school during vacations would seem to be good rather than bad for education. Increased student involvement is an advantage of any educational program. It would, however, be a disadvantage for those students who wanted to earn money working unless

that could be incorporated into their educational program.

Related to athletic and music programs is participation in student government. This problem can also be overcome. One district recounts that with YRE there has resulted a unique form of student government in which each track elects its own set of student officers and representatives.[19] Having these multiple groups of officers extends leadership opportunities to more students.

Financial Implications of YRE

The objective of the year-round program (e.g., educational opportunity, space utilization) determines the budgetary effects. Where the objective is to improve the quality of education, operational costs can increase. Programs implemented to save space may initially require greater sums, though these may in part or in whole be offset by eventual savings in reduced construction costs.

Proponents of YRE mention the following financial benefits:

1) Fewer buildings are required, reducing construction and debt services.

2) The amount of required real estate is reduced, putting valuable real estate back on the tax-producing rolls.

3) There is better utilization of materials: fewer textbooks, reference and audio-visual materials are necessary.

4) Maintenance costs are reduced: fuel, light, power and insurance costs will be avoided on the building that will not be built.

5) Intersessions, based on ADA summer funding, can provide financial assistance.

6) Vandalism will decrease, reducing the money needed for repair.

7) Transportation costs are reduced if the enrollment tracks are designated by neighborhoods.

Opponents of YRE mention the following financial drawbacks:

1) Expanding enrollments will necessitate future construction anyway, increasing the cost of labor and materials with inflation.

2) Administrative and instructional costs will increase due to longer contracts and more paper work.

3) Transportation costs will be the same or higher.

4) ADA may be adversely affected if average daily attendance is

lower (children taking vacations off-cycle).

5) Maintenance costs might increase depending on local unions.

6) Air conditioning may be necessary, increasing transitional costs and use of electricity.

7) Extending student activities year-round may increase transportation and supervision costs.

8) Wear and tear due to increased use of the school and materials may offset any reduction in outlay.

Actual cost comparisons of conventional versus year-round plans are difficult to compute. The age and type of facility, salaries of employees, and the unique characteristics of the community are all factors which must be taken into consideration. Before valid comparison data can be collected, certain variables must be made constant: quantity of education must be the same (number of hours of instruction); quality of instruction must be the same (supply and equipment level, special services); general policies must be the same (attendance requirements, transportation); and long term effects must be used for comparison (not transitional costs). For comparison of conventional and YRE common indices must be developed.

EFFECTS ON STUDENTS

Educators caught up in change and anxious to relieve financial and social pressures often lose sight of the function of schools - the education of students. A review of the literature on educational innovation reveals that the effect of change on the student is seldom systematically measured.[20] Comprehensively studying the effects of change on the student is a complicated methodological problem due to the vast number of variables present in the school system. Even when student gains or losses can be documented from one year to the next, it is impossible to point to one single variable such as YRE as the major cause of this student change unless all other independent variables have been held constant -- a methodological difficulty when using the public schools as the laboratory. It is not surprising, then, that few educators have undertaken to systematically measure and report the effects of change on the student. In this respect, year-round educators have proven to be no different than their colleagues: the effect of YRE on students is seldom systematically assessed and/or reported.

Affective Changes

Measurement within the affective domain is generally done through the use of district or school designed questionnaires. This design is characterized by questionable methodology. Questionnaires rely on self-reports by the students and the second-hand reports of teachers and parents. This method of data collection through questionnaires introduces many opportunities for contamination.

The supposed affective impact of YRE, as reported in questionnaires, is measured in two ways: by recording affective changes (YRE students become both the control and experimental groups) and by using traditional school students as a control group to which YRE students (experimental group) are compared. The first method relies on the memory of students, parents, and teachers regarding what the student was like before implementation of YRE. The contaminating variables of such a method are numerous. Responses are subject to distorted recall and "represent self-description by extremely ego-involved reporters." The second method is done without attempt at identifying and analyzing the many possible contributing variables (teacher, school, and student variables). Results of such questionnaires studies, then, suffer from questionable validity. Their results must be examined with this caution in mind.

A study utilizing the first method, recording questionnaire responses that report affective changes, was developed and administered by the La Mesa-Spring Valley School District. Six forms of a questionnaire were distributed to site

administrators, certificated staff members, students (grades 3-8), parents, classified staff, and the community. The reported findings are that students enjoy having a number of short vacation periods (84% -- all groups), that students show a greater interest in the educational program (85% -- community excluded), and that students enjoy intersession more than summer school (78% -- community and classified staff excluded).[21]

Colorado Springs also employed self-report student questionnaires for only YRE students. The results show that elementary YRE students like the time of year they have vacations and do not like to go to school in the summer. Secondary YRE students do not mind going to school when others are on vacation. They also find little value in intersessions, believing them to be less interesting than regular school.

This same district found a reversal in overall student attitude toward YRE. In 1974, a majority of the students polled responded "yes" when asked if they would like to go back to a nine-month schedule. In 1975, the majority responded "no."[22]

The results of similar studies in other districts are generally supportive of YRE. A poll taken in the Lakeside district reports that 53% of the students prefer YRE, 28% prefer traditional, and 17% have similar feelings for both.[23] Similar findings come from a study in the San Diego Unified School District: 54% prefer YRE, 28% prefer traditional, and 18% have no opinion.[24] The results of a teacher opinion survey in Elizabeth Street School in the Los Angeles Unified School District show that 61% of the teachers feel that their pupils like YRE, 2% feel their pupils dislike YRE, and 37% state that no strong student feelings have been expressed.[25] Of parents in Chula Vista, 69% feel that their children like YRE, 18% feel their children dislike YRE.[26]

Another parent study found that of parents randomly polled from 20 year-round schools in five Southern California counties, 83% preferred year-round school calendar, 13% preferred the conventional calendar and 2% remained undecided.[27]

Colorado Springs employed the method of comparing YRE with traditional schools. This district reports that elementary YRE students rate themselves higher in being a happy person, taking part in class discussions, joining in class activities, and liking their teachers. The secondary YRE students rate themselves higher in believing that teachers like them, doing good work in school, having fun with friends of the same sex, having grades that please their parents, and looking forward to going to high school. The secondary YRE students rated themselves lower in wanting their parents to meet their teachers and having school pride.[28]

Chula Vista also used this comparison method. They report that "YRE students' attitudes toward self and school (are) as good as students in traditional school.[29]

Cognitive Changes

The reports on the cognitive effects of YRE are subject to many of the same

methodological weaknesses as are the reports on affective effects.

Reported cognitive effects are based on two types of data: results of questionnaires and results of achievement testing. The first of these is invalidated by the same contaminating variables as the affective measuring instruments. The second of these is again contaminated by unanalyzed variables as were the affective measuring instruments. In addition, comprehensive evaluation of cognitive student effects due to YRE is prevented by lack of consistency in testing instruments across YRE schools (i.e., those schools that have made an attempt at evaluating cognitive student effect).

One additional concern is that changes in curricula are often implemented along with YRE. Indeed, some schools cite changes in curricula as a reason for adopting YRE. Yet standardized tests are not appropriate to assess the impact of an instructional program. As Robert Stake writes:[30]

> Discriminability among students is important for instruction and guidance, but for development and selection of curricula, tests are needed that discriminate among curricula. Different rules for test administration are possible, and different criteria of test development are appropriate, when the tests are to be used to discriminate among curricula. . .I am dismayed by my colleagues who believe that these same tests (standarized achievement tests) can be used to satisfy the needs of the curriculum evaluator.

Keeping in mind these serious questions of validity, questionnaire and survey results show that teachers, parents, and students see no negative cognitive effects of YRE. In most cases, they see positive effects. At Elizabeth Street School, for example, 26% of the teachers feel that pupils are learning more under YRE, 2% feel they are learning less, 37% feel they are learning the same, while 37% feel there is insufficient information to decide.[31] The Colorado Springs evaluative surveys show that elementary students feel they are not learning less in school under YRE and that secondary students report that their grades are the same or better under YRE.[32] Parents in Chula Vista report, 17 to 1, that YRE is academically better for their children.[33]

Reports were available on achievement testing from Colorado Springs, San Diego Unified, La Mesa-Spring Valley, and Chula Vista. The two-year achievement raw data from Colorado Springs show little achievement difference between YRE and the traditional system.[34] The Chula Vista results are equally limiting, since they are for reading achievement only. For Chula Vista, "in the year of transition from a traditional to a YRE schedule, YRE pupils performed at about the same level as traditional calendar pupils on reading achievement tests."[35]

A study of achievement test scores in San Diego Unified School District attempted to minimize variables. Attention was given to control such variables as similarities of geographic location, socio-economic characteristics, ethnic patterns, and past achievement scores. In addition, to control for any pretest advantages between the year-round and control schools on the tests, covariance analysis

was used to counterbalance initial differences. Although his exact method was not reported, Dr. Robert T. Gray analyzed the test scores:[37]

> Comparisons were made in fifty-two subgroupings made up on the basis of grade level, number of years in the program, geographical location, and available subtest scores. Seventeen of the fifty-two comparisons revealed statistically significant differences and all except three were in favor of year-round schools. Most of the year-rounding differences were concentrated in the second, third, and sixth grades. Of the differences reported, the trend was in favor of students in the year-round program for two years rather than one year.

Gray summarized the results:[38]

> While the trend of differences favors students in the year-round program for two years, it was not judged to be sufficient to constitute a definite pattern of superiority due to a continuation of insignificant differences in over half the comparisons and one in favor of the control schools.

The La Mesa-Spring Valley evaluation of scholastic achievement likewise showed careful planning, implementation, and evaluation. Even under such conditions, the limitations of the study are outlined by Dr. Martin Gernstein, coordinator:[39]

> The single measure of program effectiveness employed in this evaluation was pupil performance on a standardized achievement test. No other output measures were considered. Pupil attitude toward learning, parental and/or teacher satisfaction with the program, cost effectiveness, among others, represent other relevant output indices. . .only two input variables, mental ability and mobility, were measured or controlled. . . The evaluation, therefore, rests upon the sole output criterion of achievement test performance.

Dr. Martin Gernstein summarizes the effect of no effect in La Mesa-Spring Valley:[40]

> While this evaluation revealed no dramatic results to clearly demonstrate superior scholastic achievement of pupils in year-round school, it is clear that the introduction of YRE has had no adverse effects upon the achievement level of the pupils involved. An examination of the data presented in this evaluation suggests that the hypothesis of no difference between the programs represents a conservative perspective. The results may be interpreted to hypothesize that a program of year-round education has beneficial effects on achievement, especially at the upper grades (4-8) where pupils can more readily take advantage of the program.

In summary, then, the present information on affective and cognitive effects of YRE are inconclusive. The reports suffer from a lack of validity due to metho-

dological issues on a variety of levels and poor design. Consequently, the results of such studies cannot be used to generalize about the student effects of YRE.

The fact that YRE to this time has been characterized by poor methodology and limited scope does not suggest that accurate evaluation is impossible. Rather it suggests that evaluation of effect on students due to changes in school programs in an area that still greatly needs to be researched and developed. Identification of student variables needs to go beyond those identified by existing affective and cognitive measures to within the psychomotor domain and those suggested by the varying opportunities and emphasis of YRE. Valid instruments for measuring the changes in these student variables must then be identified or developed. Finally, these instruments must be administered in a consistent, methodologically sound manner in many YRE schools before any conclusions can be drawn about the effects of YRE on the student.

CONCLUSION

Year-round education is one innovative educational alternative that is currently being operationalized by many districts and examined by many others. This report has been intended as an objective overview of the preparation, implementation, and operational stages of YRE. It has reviewed the literature in an attempt to relate both the positive and negative aspects of YRE as viewed by those individuals directly involved -- students, parents, teachers and school administrators. With the availability of a wide variety of YRE plans and the development of flexible curricular patterns and teaching methods, YRE can be molded to fit the varied needs of most school districts in the United States.

FOOTNOTES

1. For further information on the history of The American School Calendar see Lloyd's A Year-Round School Schedule: The Financial Implications in California.

2. Curriculum Services Unit State Department of Education, California State Directory of YRE, (July, 1976), and information from SDE YRE project.

3. N. S. Rifkin, "How to Make the Switch to Year-Round School." American School Board Journal, Vol. 160, No. 2, (February, 1973), p. 40.

4. Conversation with South Whittier Elementary School District administrators, South Whittier, California.

5. Reported from Pajaro Valley Unified School District, Watsonville, California.

6. Cabrillo Unified School District, Half Moon Bay, California.

7. Pajaro Valley Unified School District, Watsonville, California.

8. Baker, James and Johnson, Viola D., "Another District Experiments with a 45-15 Plan," School Management, Vol. 17, No. 3, (March, 1973), p.24.

9. Byrne, Joyce E., Year-Round Education as Perceived by Parents, Students, and Staff, Lakeside Union School District, (January, 1974), p.3.

10. San Diego Unified School District, "A Summary Report of the Evaluation of the San Diego Unified School District's Pilot Year-Round Schools Project," San Diego Unified School District, San Diego (1975).

11. Baker, James and Johnson, Viola D., loc. cit.

12. Some colleges and universities have introduced innovative and flexible degree programs which suit the needs and schedules of the YRE teacher. California State Universities, Florida Atlantic University, Lindenwood College, New York Board of Regents, Point Loma College, and University of California.

13. National Education Association Research, "Teacher Opinion Poll," Today's Education, Vol. 68, No. 4, (November, 1974), p. 108.

14. Berger, Ellis, "Some 45-15 Drawbacks: The Teachers' View," Phi Delta Kappan, Vol. 56, No. 6, (February, 1975), p. 421.

15. San Diego Unified School District, "A Summary Report of the Evaluation of the San Diego Unified School District's Pilot Year-Round Schools Project," San Diego Unified School District, San Diego, (1975).

16. Commission on Public School Personnel Policies in Ohio, "Doors are Closed," Education Digest, Vol. 38, No. 3, (November, 1972), p. 29.

17. San Francisco State University Consultants, "A Report of Possible Adaptations of the Carlmont High School Curricula to the Four-Quarter Plan," quoted in The 4-Quarter Plan & Other Methods of High School Plant Utilization, by a Citizens Committee of the Sequoia Union High School District, p. 61.

18. These problems and advantages were taken from publications provided by Lakeside Union Elementary (San Diego, California), Cook County (Illinois), Cabrillo Unified (Half Moon Bay, California), Elizabeth Street School (Los Angeles City Unified, Los Angeles, California), Northville (Michigan), and Colorado Springs (Colorado) school districts.

19. Colorado Springs, Colorado. Information obtained at 1976 YRE Conference in Long Beach, California.

20. See Growing Up Absurd, by Paul Goodman; Innovation in Education, by Matthew Miles; The Culture of the School and the Problem of Change, by Seymour B. Sarrason; School Policy and Issues in a Changing Society, by Patricia C. Sexton; The Real World of the Public Schools, by Harry S. Broudy; Class Bureaucracy, and Schools, by Michael Katz; Encounter in the Classroom, by Elizabeth Hunter; Open Education and the American School, by Roland Barth; and the literature related to YRE in the bibliography of this paper.

21. La Mesa-Spring Valley School District, "A Visual Summary of La Mesa-Spring Valley School District's Year-Round Attitudinal Survey," (June 20, 1972).

22. Colorado Springs Public Schools, "Attitudinal Data on Concept Six Year-Round School Program."

23. Byrne, Joyce E., Year-Round Education as Perceived by Parents, Students, and Staff, Lakeside Union School District, (January, 1974).

24. San Diego Unified School District, loc. cit.

25. Elizabeth Street School, "Summary of Teacher Opinion Survey."

26. Servetter, Leonard, Year-Round School Program: A Case Study, pp. 109-110.

27. "Attitudes of Parents in Selected Year Round Schools in Southern California," Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, School of Education, University of Southern California, (1976)

28. Colorado Springs, loc. cit.

29. Servetter, Leonard, loc. cit.

30. Stake, Robert, "Perspectives of Curriculum Evaluation," in AERA Monograph Series on Curriculum Evaluation, Robert Stake, ed., pp. 5-6.

31. Elizabeth Street School, loc. cit.

32. Colorado Springs, op. cit., pp. 1-5.

33. Servetter, Leonard, op. cit., p. 110.

34. Colorado Springs Public Schools, "Two Year Achievement Data on Concept Six Year-Round School Program."

35. Servetter, Leonard, op. cit., p. 117.

36. San Diego Unified School District, op. cit., p. 5.

37. Ibid., pp. 5-6.

38. Ibid.

39. La Mesa Spring Valley School District, "Evaluation of Scholastic Achievement in the Year-Round School," p. 9.

40. Ibid., p. 10.

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